1. (currently amended) A workforce management method operative in a computer network for enabling entities to trade work schedules, where the entities are contact center agents that report to a supervisor, the method comprising:

configuring a supervisor display by which the supervisor selects which individual agents are permitted to trade work schedules, and by which the supervisor specifies a set of rules that allow work schedules to be traded, the set of rules including at least a first rule configured by the supervisor and that identifies a maximum number of time units per a given time period ~~of~~ for an agent that is permitted to trade a work schedule, and a second rule configured by the supervisor and that identifies a time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit into in order to satisfy a trade;

if a first agent is permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection, ~~enabling the first agent to offer for trading~~ offering for trade a first work schedule, the first work schedule being offered by the first agent and having associated therewith a second work schedule as defined by the first agent that the first agent is willing to accept in trade for the first work schedule; ~~and~~

if a second agent is permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection and if the trade does not violate either the first rule or the second rule as configured by the supervisor, ~~enabling the second agent to accept~~ accepting in trade, by the second agent, the first agent's first work schedule; and

inhibiting trading of work schedules by the first and second agents if (i) the first agent is not permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection; (ii) the second agent is not permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection, or (iii) the first and second agents are permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection but the trade violates either the first rule or the second rule as configured by the supervisor.

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (cancelled)

5. (previously presented) The method as described in claim 1 further including having the supervisor configure the supervisor display to specify a third rule that restricts the first and second agents from trading work schedules unless the first and second agents are members of a given workgroup.

6. (previously presented) The method as described in claim 1 further including having the supervisor configure the supervisor display to specify a third rule that restricts the first and second agents from trading work schedules unless the first and second agents share a given skill.

7. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 wherein the time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit identifies a ~~week~~ period having a specified length, the ~~week~~ period starting on a specified ~~day of the week~~ weekday or on a given date.

8. (previously presented) The method as described in claim 1 wherein the time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit identifies a given calendar month.

9. (previously presented) The method as described in claim 1 further including having the supervisor configure the supervisor display to specify an advance notice requirement that must be respected before a schedule trade may occur.

10. (previously presented) Apparatus for use in conjunction with a database of agent work schedule information, comprising:

a processor;

code executable by the processor for generating a display from which a supervising entity manages how a set of agents can trade work schedules; and

code executable by the processor and responsive to a selection in the display for enabling enforcement of a set of rules that allow work schedules to be traded: (a) if first approved by the supervising entity, (b) if agents are members of a given workgroup, (c) if agents have a same given skill attribute, (d) if a given work schedule being traded does not exceed a given number of time units per a given time period; (e) if a given work schedule being traded satisfies a given time constraint, where the given time constraint is configured by the supervising entity and identifies a time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit into in order to satisfy the given time constraint; and (f) if an advance notice requirement for permitting a schedule trade to occur has been respected.

11-17. (cancelled)